



Senate Minority Leader Pat Bates

Candidate for Senate, District 36

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral Health matters because it affects all of us – our loved ones, our family members and our friends.

I am committed to making behavioral health a top policy priority.



Rebecca Bauer-Kahan

Candidate for Assembly, District 16

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Yes, behavioral health should be a priority in Sacramento.



Assemblyman Marc Berman

Candidate for Assembly, District 24

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

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Tasha Boerner Horvath

Candidate for Assembly, District 76

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

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Assemblyman Rob Bonta

Candidate for Assembly, District 18

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

More education is key to destigmatizing behavioral health. We need to learn more about what leads to behavioral health conditions and start to understand these are more common than one might think. Most people know someone who is dealing with a behavioral health issue but might not realize it. That's part of the problem. If we can educate our communities on how to identify behavioral health issues and how to properly address them before they become larger problems, we'll be setting our communities up for greater success.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

California should invest more in our mental health service programs – especially for our youth. Whether these services are at school sites, or in more accessible areas of the community, there's much more that we can do. Addressing issues early on before they evolve into greater issues down the road will have positive outcomes for our health care systems and communities.

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral health matters because it affects all of us. Our schools, our workplaces, our healthcare systems, our friends and our families deal with these issues on a daily basis and are looking for ways to do better. Without the appropriate resources to address these issues, our communities suffer.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Absolutely.



Rep. Julia Brownley

Candidate for Congress, District 26

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Addressing and treating behavioral health issues, including mental health, substance use, intellectual disabilities, and co-occurring disorders, provides integrated healthcare services that better promote wellness and recovery for individuals, families, and communities.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

The State of California has taken critical steps to increase access to behavioral healthcare by expanding the Medi-Cal program to cover 3.7 million Californians who were not previously eligible. While 34 states (including the District of Columbia) have taken advantage of the Medicaid expansion, as a federal policymaker, I believe that we must do more to encourage the remaining 17 states to expand their Medicaid programs. Ensuring that every American has healthcare coverage is the number one thing that the federal government can do to improve access to behavioral healthcare treatment.

Congress should also take action to help states expand the number of beds available for treatment at in-patient facilities. I recently voted for the IMD CARE Act (H.R. 5797) to help address this issue.

Additionally, Congress should do more to encourage young people to enter these fields, because we face an impending shortage of physicians for both

primary and specialty care. That is why I am a strong supporter of federal programs, like the National Health Service Corps, Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, the Conrad 30 Waiver Program, and the Title VII/VIII workforce development and diversity pipeline programs, which help to recruit a diverse workforce and encourage physicians to enter shortage specialties and to practice in under-served communities.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

Public education, talking openly, and compassion are some of the most effective ways that we can reduce the stigma associated with behavioral health conditions. At the federal level, I have been a strong supporter of resources for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) public health and outreach programs that help to coordinate efforts to destigmatize these conditions and promote public education to help medical professionals, families, and communities better understand behavioral health issues.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Absolutely.



Assemblyman David Chiu

Candidate for Assembly, District 17

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

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Assemblyman Steven Choi

Candidate for Assembly, District 68

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

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I am committed to making behavioral health a top policy priority.



Assemblyman Kansen Chu

Candidate for Assembly, District 25

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral health impacts everything a person think, do, or say. Good behavioral health is important to ensure overall wellness of a person, therefore, affordable access to support is crucial for our communities. In California, over 8 million adults and children suffer from mental illness and addiction disorders and I believe that the state can do more to expand access and promote early prevention and intervention.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

I have been a proponent for improving access to mental health support, specifically, early prevention and intervention actions for youth. This year, I introduced legislation to require that all schools provide on-campus mental health services for students. According to research, 76 percent of youth with mental health conditions receive no or insufficient treatment. Studies also show that school is the best place to provide mental health services for children and I believe that early prevention and intervention will be more effective. However, my proposal was not resolved this year and I will continue to push for this policy in the upcoming year.

In addition to early mental health support, I believe that more needs to be done to integrate behavioral health treatments with overall health services. A person's well-being involves both physical and mental health. Without proper integration, the treatment might only cure the symptoms but not the cause.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

A practical way to destigmatize behavioral health conditions is to raise awareness through education. It is often due to the lack of understanding that results in harmful judgement and prejudice. I believe we need to integrate behavioral health into our education system, our health system, and community engagement. It is important that everyone understands the impacts of behavioral health conditions to ensure positive changes in laws, policies, and practices.

In addition, due to the great diversity in California, behavioral health services need to be culturally appropriate to increase effectiveness and decrease the perceived associated negative connotation. In many cultures, behavioral health conditions are still not recognized as treatable illnesses and increasing understanding would destigmatize and encourage individuals to seek out treatments. Behavioral health services need to be comprehensive to cater to people from different backgrounds.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

I have been and will continue to be an advocate for behavioral health public policies that would ensure equitable access to services, improve integration of behavioral health services into our treatment system, and funding for early prevention and intervention efforts for youth. In the upcoming years, I will continue to work on these goals, especially policies to provide mental health

support in schools. Early access to services helps reduce suspension and expulsion rates, tardiness, poor academic performance and problematic contact with law enforcement. School is a great place for education, increasing awareness, destigmatizing, ensuring equitable access and providing early prevention and intervention.



Gil Cisneros

Candidate for Congress, District 39

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral health matters because it is as important as physical health, and affects everyone regardless of age, race, or wealth. The behavioral health of one individual can have an impact on their children, their spouse, their friends, and their co-workers. Behavioral health is increasingly a challenge for children and veterans. As the son of a Vietnam veteran, I saw my father go years undiagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. As a veteran myself, I am greatly concerned that 22 veterans succumb to suicide each day.

There needs to be regular awareness to identify and address behavioral health issues. Like my father for many years, many individuals go untreated because they lack access to affordable care. The stigma associated with behavioral health can also make it difficult for many to seek care. Identifying and addressing behavioral health issues helps our communities succeed by preventing those from falling victim to crime or suicide.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

Federal, state, county, and local officials in California need to work together toward policies and funding that would increase access to care for those with mental health and substance use challenges. In Congress, I commit to fighting to bring federal resources to California and working with local health care

professionals to increase awareness and access to support services. We need to increase education on behavioral and mental health services and help make Californians aware of available care. We need to address California's shortage of mental health professionals. I've heard too many stories of our college students seeking professional help, only to be told there was no availability. We also need to protect access to behavioral health coverage that was given to many through the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

I understand that servicemen and women across the nation struggle to gain access to healthcare when it matters most. Veterans are waiting for seven, eight, and sometimes even nine months for an appointment at the VA. The facilities are already working with limited funding, and now some Congressional leaders want to make further cuts. It is vital that veterans have immediate access to the physical, mental, and emotional care they need upon returning from combat zones. I will fight for increased funding to the VA, which will ensure that veterans are receiving the top-quality care and services that they need.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

Stigma and misunderstandings associated with behavioral health need to end. Behavioral health issues must be brought out of the shadows and publicly discussed. In Congress, I will use my office to raise public awareness and help eradicate the stigma associated with behavioral health. California must support open dialogue on behavioral and mental health in order to educate the public and encourage those facing behavioral health issues to seek help.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

As a veteran and son of a veteran, I understand the importance of making behavioral policy a priority. Through my foundation's work in education, I have

seen the challenges that students face. Many of our scholarship recipients want and need support services. My wife and I created the Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute at George Washington University to help provide students with a support system so they could thrive in college away from home. Since the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting I have been a supporter of the Gifford's Courage to Fight Gun Violence and believe that behavioral health should be included in the conversation on gun violence prevention. It is heartbreaking that guns are responsible for over 50% of suicide deaths.

Behavioral health plays a role across policy issues, from veteran affairs, to education, to gun safety, and many more. We need to work together to elevate behavioral health as a policy priority. I commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority in Congress, and will champion behavioral health policy that provides prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery support for Californians.



Assemblyman Tom Daly

Candidate for Assembly, District 69

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral health matters because it affects everyone – not only the one diagnosed. It even goes beyond friends and family to include community and society.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

According to the National Academy of Science, almost 30% of American adults have either a mental health or substance abuse disorder. California should explore the development of a new payment approach that recognizes the cost of managing the care of patients who have interacting medical and behavioral health conditions as most patients with severe medical conditions also experience mental health problems. California should also explore investing in programs to expand and diversify the clinical workforce to improve service to our underserved communities.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

Educate the public that a behavioral health condition is a disease similar to cancer and diabetes.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Yes, absolutely.



Rep. Mark DeSaulnier

Candidate for Congress, District 11

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Mental and behavioral health care far too often considered separate from physical health, which not only makes seeking treatment more complicated, but also contributes to the stigma. Unfortunately, when ignored and left untreated, mental and behavioral health conditions can cause a whole host of lifestyle difficulties including homelessness and hunger. With proper treatment and care, the vast majority of individuals who suffer from mental and behavioral health conditions can experience much needed relief and live healthy, productive lives. Health care can and should treat the whole person.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

First and foremost, California and the federal government should create parity between mental and behavioral health and traditional medical care. We must ensure that all patients have access to the care they need to live healthy lives. This means increasing funding to essential research at the NIH and CDC; increasing prevention and early warning programs; developing and expanding access to treatment programs; and destigmatizing mental and behavioral health conditions. There is no easy fix to these challenges, but if we provide the resources necessary we can reduce substance abuse, and relieve mental and behavioral health patients of many of the burdens they currently experience. We also need to better teach community leaders that those with substance use

challenges need mental and behavioral health interventions like rehab, and that the legal system is not their only recourse.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

Destigmatizing behavioral health is no simple task. It will require an overarching change in the way that society and the medical community consider and view overall health; but California can indeed lead the way. California should introduce mental and behavioral health parity in health care to ensure patients have access to needed resources. Additionally, California should implement health classes in schools that teach children that those with mental and behavioral health are not lesser or different, and should be treated with equality and respect. California can also take steps to empower individuals with mental and behavioral health conditions by increasing access to job training and employment opportunities that are accessible and allow people to live as part of our communities.

Why does behavioral health matter?

I have always been a strong supporter of funding and programs that destigmatize mental and behavioral health, and create opportunities for those who have mental and behavioral health conditions. I firmly support mental and behavioral health parity, and will work with my colleagues in Congress, and at the state and local level where appropriate, to improve the way we view, diagnose, treat, and discuss mental and behavioral health. Please let me know if you have any questions or need anything else.



Rep. Anna Eshoo

Candidate for Congress, District 18

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

https://youtu.be/r6_t8wb-dMQ

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

<https://youtu.be/IVm1msDUDpM>

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

<https://youtu.be/B7ybhStmlaQ>

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

<https://youtu.be/y8hEysA2NYY>



Assemblywoman Laura Friedman

Candidate for Assembly, District 43

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Because behavioral health is intricately linked to one's quality of life.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

We need more resources, including more treatment options and longer treatment. So, for those struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

By offering a full course of treatments tailored to each individual case, and encouraging people to come forward in a proactive manner.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Yes.



Congressman John Garamendi

Candidate for Congress, District 3

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

<https://youtu.be/gmyqNw0bqUk>



Assemblyman Eduardo Garcia

Candidate for Assembly, District 56

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

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Assemblyman Todd Gloria

Candidate for Assembly, District 78

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Yes.



Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher

Candidate for Assembly, District 80

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

1 in 4 adults experience a behavior health challenge every year and 1 in 5 children have a diagnosable mental health disorder. The National Institute of Drug Abuse reported this year that 7.7 million adults have co-occurring substance abuse and mental illness. These numbers show that we are all affected by behavioral health — whether it's because someone themselves is experiencing it or because a family member or a friend is.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

First and foremost, California needs to make sure that every single person in the state has access to affordable and quality health care. That means expanding the services we already offer to as many Californians as possible and fighting back against the Trump administration's attack on our healthcare.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

Mental health awareness and substance abuse education need to be a regular part of routine visits to the doctor's and we have to encourage open and honest conversations about behavioral health within our own families and close circles.

As parents, we need to be honest about our own challenges with behavioral health — being good role models for our children who might encounter such challenges in the future.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Absolutely. Prioritizing behavioral health means prioritizing the well-being of my constituents and all of Californians.



Assemblywoman Monique Limón

Candidate for Assembly, District 37

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Yes.



Assemblyman Brian Maienschein

Candidate for Assembly, District 77

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral Health is a priority for me and I have authored several bills to address mental health. This year, I carried AB 1893, 2193 and 2018. I plan to continue focusing on this important issue area.



Congresswoman Doris Matsui

Candidate for Congress, District 6

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

No matter who you are or where you come from, every American is in some way impacted by mental illness. And yet, for so long, families who are suffering have been left without options. There are children in this country battling mental illness who have no treatment or care at all. We have counties in this country without a single practicing psychiatrist, psychologist, or social worker.

As a Member of the Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee and a long-time champion of mental health, I have heard the stories of many families affected by mental illness and witnessed the tragic consequences of communities not having access to adequate mental health treatments and care.

I truly believe that together, we can turn those stories of despair into stories of hope. It's what drives my work to fix our broken system.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

If we are going to change the trajectory of mental health care in this country, it's going to take long term investments in care.

California has already started that investment; expanding Medi-Cal, to cover over 9 million Californians. Medicaid is the single largest payer for mental health

services in California and in the United States, and the program must be protected and strengthened. We also need to build on the momentum of the Affordable Care Act to ensure that we don't return to a time when having a mental illness is a pre-existing condition that prevents you from accessing the care you need.

Finally, we must continue making investments in prevention. When we bolster preventive services, we strengthen the whole spectrum of mental health care, including treatment and crisis care.

We have taken some important steps over the last few years to shed light on the importance of mental health reform, but much work remains.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

Here in California, and across the country, we need to treat mental illness and substance use disorders as physical diseases. That means we need to integrate care and services for individuals with mental illness and treat the whole person – both body and mind.

We cannot have a truly integrated system, with the care coordination we envision, if behavioral health providers don't have electronic health records. We must work to harness the power of technology to improve the accessibility of behavioral health treatment, particularly in under-served communities.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

I will continue to be an outspoken advocate for the mental health community during my time in Congress, by working to improve our treatment programs and spread awareness and education about mental health. I believe we need to mental health at all places along its spectrum, from prevention and early intervention to treatment and management of severe mental illness.



Senator Holly Mitchell

Candidate for Senate, District 30

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Our mental health impacts how we view ourselves, the world around us and ultimately how we experience life. This matters because it impacts us all. Behavioral health is inextricably tied to our well being and overall health. There are over 6 million Californians who have experienced mental health challenges. All Californians deserve quality behavioral health resources, support and information to support them on their mental health journey.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

From anxiety to clinical disorders and substance abuse, behavioral health is one of the most common health conditions. Providing comprehensive health care means caring about behavioral health. To help increase access to care I support the creation of a comprehensive statewide plan that would ensure the quality of care a patient receives isn't based on their zip code. I also support more funding for preventative and early interventions to quickly identify the specific support people need in order to regain control of their lives. We know that behavioral health is deeply tied to other social challenges, such as – homelessness, criminal justice, veterans rights and dysfunctional family dynamics – this is why we must ensure organizations focused on these key social issues have stronger ties to the behavioral health resources needed for the vulnerable populations they serve.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

We can set an example for how to destigmatize behavioral health by not being afraid to talk about it, by having comprehensive legislation that supports people impacted by mental health and substance abuse challenges and by uplifting the great on-the-ground work and wins from community organizations and advocates across California.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Yes I will continue to view behavioral health as a critical issue that is tied to systemic health and racial injustice challenges.



Rep. Grace Napolitano

Candidate for Congress, District 32

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral health affects everyone. For example, 1 in 5 children and adolescents suffer from some form of behavioral and mental illness. And many of our brave military service members suffer from Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Today, more people die from suicide in the United States than from traffic accidents or homicides, and we lose 22 veterans to suicide daily.

Most behavioral health issues go untreated because individuals either cannot afford care, lack access, or do not know anyone they can turn to for help. Stigma associated with behavioral health issues is a huge contributor as well. Investing in preventive behavioral and mental health will give our family members, neighbors, colleagues and loved ones a better future. Without help, those with behavioral illnesses are more likely to fall victim to crime, drugs, imprisonment, or suicide. Speaking out to raise public awareness and eradicate stigma associated with behavioral health is critical.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

As a Member of the United States Congress, I fight every day to bring critical federal financial resources to the state of California and work with local health

care professionals and entities like Entertainment Industries Council (EIC) to raise awareness and reduce stigma associated with behavioral health.

I have established a locally based mental health consortium working group which meets quarterly per year and work to address and improve behavioral health in the San Gabriel Valley and beyond.

This consortium works together to meet and network with behavioral health officials to address the needs of residents from all walks of life. The state of veterans' mental health is one of the Consortium's top concerns, as our heroes are returning with Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). We must prioritize services as a community: reach out to our veterans and their families, let them know of our support, and remind them it is always okay to seek help.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

Unfortunately, because of the stigma associated with behavioral illness, many people are too ashamed or embarrassed to seek the help they need for themselves or their loved ones. As co-chair of the Congressional Mental Health Caucus (which includes work on behavioral health), I work with my Republican co-chair each day to hold legislative briefings and press events to raise awareness and help break through that stigma.

We express compassion for those who struggle with behavioral health issues, and we draw attention to the proven methods that can help change their lives for the better. For more information on these legislative events dating back to the past decade, please visit my website

at: www.napotitano.house.gov/issues/mental-health

In the 32nd congressional district which I represent, we have gained momentum and have seen results in addressing behavioral health through the local Mental

Health Consortium which I established, by collaborating with our local behavioral health providers and community leaders. This model can and should be implemented in communities throughout our state of California.

I also have and will continue to support state propositions like Prop. 63 which is critical for local counties to receive the funds they need for personnel and other resources to address behavioral health throughout our communities.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

I have always and will continue to embrace behavioral health as a priority in the U.S. Congress. In 2003 I founded the Congressional Mental Health Caucus and have served as a co-chair each year since. With a Republican co-chair, I work to promote legislation that help reduce behavioral health stigma, holding several congressional hearings and briefings annually and enacting legislation into law, such as securing mental health parity in the Affordable Care Act.

After learning one in three Latina adolescents (ages 9-11) had contemplated suicide, in 2001 I secured federal funding to create a pilot program to provide on-site, culturally and linguistically appropriate mental and behavioral health services and suicide prevention services for students.

With assistance from LA County Mental Health, this program, which began in four schools has now expanded to 29 schools throughout the San Gabriel Valley and Southeast LA County. It now serves as a model for H.R. 2913, the Mental Health in Schools Act.

After the tragic Newtown shooting, in 2013 I was appointed to serve as vice-chair of the House Democratic Gun Violence Prevention Task Force to ensure behavioral health remained a critical part of the conversation on gun violence prevention.

I remain committed to continuing to reduce the harmful stigma related to behavioral and mental illness and educating public officials, communities, and families on warning signs and symptoms and that it is ok to seek help



Assemblyman Adrin Nazarian

Candidate for Assembly, District 46

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

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Congressman Jimmy Panetta

Candidate for Congress, District 20

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Behavioral health is important as it refers to – and works to address – mental and substance abuse issues. The connection between behavioral health and physical health are inextricably linked and can exacerbate each other if not detected and treated. An individual living with a chronic health condition may be at higher risk to develop a mental health disorder, such as depression, which can increase one’s risk to develop a substance dependency. These comorbidities can further increase one’s chances of other issues including homelessness or involvement in the criminal justice system. This is certainly not the case for the majority of those living with these conditions. As a former prosecutor, I witnessed the impact behavioral health has on an individual through a criminal justice lens.

Public policy makers must examine behavioral health in conjunction with physical health to help ensure laws, regulations, and government sponsored programs are crafted to best serve the health of the whole person.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

Like much of the rest of the country, California must make more of a commitment to expanding access to care and treatment for those living with a

mental illness and those struggling with substance abuse. The state did well to expand Medi-Cal, as Medicaid is the largest payer of mental health services in the United States. This was a tremendous step to serving our state and providing coverage.

California would also do well to examine appropriate and responsible alternative methods for helping those with mental health and substance abuse issues who enter the judicial system. For example, I was a strong advocate for the Veterans Treatment Court in Monterey County, which works to resolve criminal cases involving veterans through treatment and support. They work to examine the root cause of a veteran's criminal behavior, and seek to provide that individual with the support and guidance they need to stay out of the judicial system and stay healthy. As we learn more about the link between substance abuse and combat-related mental illness, California should further examine ways to address this unique population, and further seek ways to help non-veterans with mental illness and substance abuse issues entering into the criminal justice system.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

Destigmatizing behavioral health conditions is an ongoing issue the state and the country face. California must ensure that those living with mental health illness have adequate access to coverage and treatment. Further, through the integration of care, California may further link physical and behavioral health issues as intertwined and craft policies that work to treat them as such.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

I will continue to be a strong advocate for behavioral health as a public policy priority. Before entering Congress, I fought for the implementation of a Veterans Treatment Court in Monterey County, and bring that same commitment with me

to Washington, D.C. Ensuring that federal funding and services are available to address juvenile and adults with behavioral health issues is critical to the long-term health of our country.

As a former prosecutor, my introduction to behavioral health was through the lens of the criminal justice system. A 2006 Bureau of Justice Statistics report indicated that approximately 74 percent of state prisoners, 63 percent of federal prisoners, and 76 percent of jail inmates met the criteria of a mental health disorder. More than 40 percent of state prisoners had indices for both mental and substance abuse disorders. In the juvenile justice system, over half met the criteria for a mental illness and 60 percent for a substance abuse disorder. I want to advance public policy that will better prevent, identify, and treat these individuals before they reach the courtroom, and in doing so foster an environment that better helps all those with behavioral health needs.



Assemblyman Jim Patterson

Candidate for Assembly, District 23

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

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I am committed to making behavioral health a top policy priority.



Rep. Scott Peters

Candidate for Congress, District 52

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral health refers to more than just mental health. It refers more generally to a person's well-being: how a person's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors are all connected. People often say that mental health is physical health and vice versa. Countless studies have shown that people suffering from depression, stress, and anxiety and other mental health conditions are at a higher risk of developing chronic disease, including diabetes, stroke, and heart disease. But studies have shown that only 40% of a person's health is determined by genetic factors and healthcare. Employment, education, housing, and other social determinants of health determine 60% of a person's well-being. I think it's crucial for people to know that with the right support and treatment, people do get better and go on to live fulfilling lives. When policymakers make behavioral health a priority, they are showing a commitment to solving larger societal problems such as homelessness, inequality and unemployment.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

I think there are three important steps California can take to increase access to behavioral health care. First, we need to be worried about the fact that we are facing a shortage of behavioral health workers that is only going to worsen as the incidence of mental illness continues to rise. A recent University of California San Francisco study shows that if current trends continue, California will have

50% fewer psychiatrists and a 28% fewer psychologists, marriage and family therapists, clinical counselors and social workers by 2028. We need to be making major investments today. These investments could come in the form of loan repayments, more money for residency programs, and more targeted training to ensure that we have a racially and ethnically diverse workforce. Second, I think it's important that California invest in high quality research, data collection and analysis to help policymakers at both the state and federal level make informed decisions about what is working and what is not. Lastly, we've got to address the role that severe mental illness plays in our homelessness problem. It's estimated that 26% of adults in shelters are struggling with a severe mental illness and more than 46% with a mental illness and some substance use disorder.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

Although uninsured rates have fallen steeply, studies suggest that as many as 63% of people who need help, aren't seeking it out. It's a great thing that many more people have coverage today, but we've also got to think about ways to motivate people to *want* to seek treatment. In California, more than 8 million people experience some type of behavioral health condition. That's about 1 in 6 Californians. People need to know that mental illness is common and treatable. According to the National Advisory Mental Health Council, the rates of recovery are impressive: 65-80% from major depression, 60% from schizophrenia and 70% from addiction. People should know that with the right treatment, it's possible for everyone to live healthy and productive lives.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

1 in 6 people today are affected by a mental health or substance use disorder. Behavioral health is not a niche issue, but a public health priority. Congress

needs to appropriate funding commensurate with the scope and scale of the problem. I'm pleased that Congress authorized the Community Service Block Grant at \$725 million, which is an increase of \$10 million from last year. We also gave about \$4 billion dollars overall for opioid prevention and treatment and other mental health initiatives, which is almost \$3 billion dollar increase from last year. I will make sure that next year we do even better.



Assemblyman Bill Quirk

Candidate for Assembly, District 20

3 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral health impacts us all. California needs to provide more access to care for those with mental health and substance use challenges. This is why my colleagues and I have continually pushed to increase the state's medical reimbursement rates in an effort to increase access for all. It is also why as the former Chair of the Assembly Public Safety Committee I moved to decriminalize substance use charges and instead focus on creating avenues to reduce recidivism and support local rehabilitation programs. Our healthcare system as a whole is severely underfunded and unable to focus enough on prevention and early intervention. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to help solve these issues.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

This change must begin in our policy making process as well as our rhetoric around behavioral health. Although California made some strides when we passed Proposition 63, the California Mental Health Services Act in 2004, the cuts that behavioral health services experienced during the recession have never been reversed. Locally I have pushed to support local behavioral health providers especially in school settings. As former chair, and current member of, the Assembly Committee on Public Safety I have supported bills to increase training for peace officers and firefighters to recognize the signs of mental illness

in order to help them respond accordingly. This year we passed a budget to provide mental health services to the homeless, children and help with criminal justice diversion.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Yes, behavioral health is a lens we need to use to look at health policy across the board from k-12 education to public safety. We need to better understand how conversations about behavioral health can help us better craft policy solutions.



Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva

Candidate for Assembly, District 65

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral health issues negatively affect most of us in some way. Our family members, our friends, and other members of our community face behavioral health problems on a daily basis. Behavioral health challenges are a serious and growing problem for our children and for California families. As a teacher of 30 years, I understand that it is increasingly more and important to identify these health challenges, and address them head-on.

The challenges of behavioral health exist beyond the problems of one individual. They impact the productivity of local businesses, and health care costs, impede the abilities of children to succeed in school, and lead to disruptions in families.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

As a representative, it is important to provide the community with strong connections to behavioral health support services. It is also important to support individuals living with mental illnesses, and encourage them to seek help when they can. Further education regarding behavioral health issues will also help others in the community understand the difficulties of those affected by these health conditions.

Community connectedness and support is important to the long-term recovery of people living with mental illnesses. It is important to bring the community together in discussions to help identify the effects these issues have on our families, and help each other seek answers.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

We must continue to promote awareness of the serious health challenges that are pervasive in the community. There are unfortunate social stigmas associated with behavioral health, and these stigmas are liable to hinder a person's ability to seek help.

California should also do more to develop the emotional well-being of our youth. Ideally this education can extend beyond the classroom and into the everyday lives of people. School-based mental health programs can focus on promoting mental wellness, preventing mental health problems, and providing treatment.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

I commit to behavioral health as a policy priority, because through the shaping of sound public policies we will garner community responses that will promote recovery and reduce the impact of behavioral health problems when they do occur. The focus of policy should be education, outreach of resources, and ensuring that needed treatments and services are available to those that need it the most.



Harley Rouda

Candidate for Congress, District 48

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral health impacts many people across the board, regardless of age, race, religion, political beliefs or socio-economic background. Mental health challenges, as well as substance use challenges, affect one in four adults, and touches just about every family in America. It is a huge and growing problem, and over half of adults with mental illness have no access to treatment. In our district 48, we have a real and growing problem of homelessness fueled in part by fraudulent sober living homes, a long-overlooked opioid crisis, and mental health issues going unaddressed. When I am in Congress, I will make sure that we obtain our fair share of behavioral health funding, and work with our cities to make sure these issues are being properly addressed.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

We need to make sure that everyone has access to affordable health care, which always includes mental health and substance use prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery support. In addition to health care, California should provide social services and education for patients and family members struggling with behavioral health challenges, and law enforcement and criminal justice systems modified to recognize that mental health and substance abuse are diseases, not crimes, and should be treated as such.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

California always leads the way, so this should be no different! We need to reframe the narrative around mental health with more compassion for those suffering from mental health. For too long, our country has ignored and stigmatized mental health and behavioral health issues, but this needs to end.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Yes, when in Congress, I will commit to making behavioral health a priority, because if left ignored, it will trickle down even further and negatively impact into all aspects of society – homelessness, crime, income inequality. Prevention is always the best solution, whether physical or mental health, and in the end, any money spent on behavioral health will save money in the long run.



Christy Smith

Candidate for Assembly, District 38

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral Health matters because it affects all of us – our loved ones, our family members and our friends.

I am committed to making behavioral health a top policy priority.



Assemblyman Mark Stone

Candidate for Assembly, District 29

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Behavioral Health matters because it affects all of us – our loved ones, our family members and our friends.

I am committed to making behavioral health a top policy priority.



Assemblywoman Marie Waldron

Candidate for Assembly, District 75

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

Behavioral health affects the healthcare system in a big way. Many people with behavioral health problems have not even been diagnosed and there is also the issue of co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders. The impacts to our system impact not only healthcare, but the criminal justice system, schools, families, workplaces. It is far better to treat a mental illness than spend enormous amounts incarcerating mental patients.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

Access to treatments must be increased as the cost of not getting people into care is impacting our state in many ways (as mentioned above). Incentivising more providers and clinicians to become trained and certified in recognizing and treating mental illness. Eliminating 'stigma' associated with mental illness will bring more people into care. Increasing the availability of telemedicine and providers in rural areas will be helpful. In addition, boosting medi-cal rates for behavioral health/substance abuse disorder treatment will incentivize more providers to be trained. Medi-cal budgets must recognize the large impact of

behavioral health issues on the system, including costs, hospitalizations, criminal justice, etc.

California can be a leader in destigmatization of mental illness by talking about it openly. If people understood how common it is, from maternal mental health issues to bi-polar disorders, etc., being able to feel free to see a provider and not feel shame will go along way. Also, being sure that primary care doctors and nurse practitioners are trained in recognizing the signs of behavioral health issues.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

During my 6 years in the Assembly, I have been a strong advocate for patient access to treatment serving on the Assembly Health Committee, and as a member of the Mental Health Legislative Caucus. From 2018-2023 I will be serving on the Coordinating Committee of the Stanford Neurosciences Institute for a five year initiative dedicated to fostering connections between scientists and policy makers regarding the opioid and substance addiction crisis.

I also serve on the Prevention Support Team of Mental Health Systems-North Inland Community Prevention Program, Vice Chair of the Select Committee on Infectious Disease in High Risk Communities and is a member of the new Select Committee on Health Care Delivery & Universal Coverage dealing with health coverage and access issues.

These are some bills I authored to increase access to care for patients:

AB 59: Laura's law sunset extension (2015)

Ab-1814 (prescriber prevails act 2014)

Ab-182: HOPE (Heroin, Opioid Public Education Act)

AB-473: Criminal Justice Pilot programs (maybe)

AB-532: Drug courts: Drug and Alcohol assistance

Ab 1353: Continuity of care (maybe)

Ab 2174- HOPE again

AB-1963: Medi-Cal reimbursement increase for MATs

AB 2804: SUD workforce development bill

AB 59: Laura's law sunset extension (2015)

Ab-1814 (prescriber prevails 2014)



Buffy Wicks

Candidate for Assembly, District 15

4 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

With one in four Americans experiencing behavioral health needs annually, it is clear that behavioral health is a critical issue throughout our communities, and should be as much of a priority as physical health in our progressive policy reforms. Whether it is ourselves or our loved ones who we care for, most of us experience at one time or another the challenges and pain that result from mental health or substance abuse needs. Currently, our health care system is not set up to effectively support these needs, and the stigma and prejudice around these issues remain a constant in our society. We can and must do better.

Today, about two-thirds of California adults with a mental illness, and two-thirds of adolescents with major depressive episodes, do not get treated. When Californians lack effective and accessible behavioral health supports, our children, our families, and our workforce see the debilitating consequences spread throughout the rest of community life. Unmet behavioral health needs stop kids from succeeding in school, lead to unjust spikes in homelessness and prison populations, cost us millions of dollars in ER visits and incarceration processes, and limit our workforce from accessing critical opportunities to succeed and thrive. If we truly want to embody our progressive values, we have to recognize that quality health care means providing the physical and mental health services, as well as compassionate and evidence-based substance

abuse rehabilitative programs, that Californians need to live healthy, fulfilling lives.

What steps should California take to increase access to care for those with mental illness and substance use challenges?

First and foremost, we need to end the displacement of and incarceration of people with behavioral health needs in our communities. Currently, those who lack mental health care services or substance abuse treatment services are more likely to become homeless, and homelessness often causes serious mental illness. Because of this negative cycle, about 1 in 5 homeless individuals report a mental health illness and/or a substance abuse disorder.

Yet too often, we simply lock these people up instead of addressing the root problem. A person dealing with severe mental illness in California is four times more likely to be in prison than in a state behavioral health care facility. Not only does this approach to homelessness and behavioral health lack compassion and equity considerations, but it results in too much spending on our jails that we desperately need for our schools, transportation, and public housing. We need to do away with local policies that criminalize homelessness, and we need to expand the use of behavioral health and substance abuse treatment alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders that are struggling with these issues.

We must also expand our social safety net to address the root causes of behavioral health needs, and we must better coordinate and streamline our behavioral health services so that it is easy for people to access help if they need it. Our community clinics and nonprofit service organizations are fundamental supports for this work. We must expand their capacity to provide effective and compassionate behavioral health services and better integrate

these services with physical health services by fixing our reimbursement rate structures.

We must bolster funding for safety net health providers like Highland Hospital in Oakland, which is using innovative programs and medication-assisted treatment practices to help their patients end drug dependencies. These hospitals and community clinics who serve primarily low-income communities need the financial and staffing capacity to be able to meet the physical and behavioral health needs of their patients, who are often overexposed to mental health needs and substance abuse risks because of the glaring inequities in our other public systems. Increased state support for our safety net providers, in addition to better statewide structure and strategy around how we spend Mental Health Services Act revenue, can help hospitals and community clinics better integrate their mental and physical care services and make these services more robust.

So how do we fund this work? The Mental Health Services Act provides us with a stable funding source for services to our homeless community members with mental health needs. But more than a decade after it was passed, state officials are missing the data to understand if and how that money is being used and whether it is truly helping this population. And a huge portion of that money is currently being held up in administrative court proceedings. I support Proposition 2, which would help immediately free up the 2 billion dollars allocated by the 2016 No Place Like Home program to provide supportive housing services to homeless people with mental illnesses.

How can California lead the way in destigmatizing behavioral health conditions?

We need to shift our collective mindset in California to acknowledge that mental health issues and substance abuse are chronic illnesses just like diabetes or heart conditions, and that we have a responsibility to meet these health needs

with urgency and compassion, just like any physical health condition. In order to get to this place, we need to change the way we talk about and address behavioral health issues in all our public systems.

That change starts in our schools: we must allocate far more resources and preventative programs to address students' social and emotional needs. These resources should include increased funding for school psychologists, nurses, counselors, and an investment in restorative justice programs. We also need curricula in all our schools which emphasizes tolerance and compassion, and which explicitly includes education about behavioral health so that our kids grow up without stigmas or prejudice around these issues.

We need to also train and inform our public workforce and elected leaders about behavioral health needs so we can destigmatize behavioral health conditions within our own public systems. This means more dialogue about behavioral health root causes and impact on communities, and more funding for community awareness campaigns. We should prioritize these actions especially for our homelessness outreach and law enforcement workforce, so that we can begin to reverse the cycle of displacement and incarceration of our neighbors and friends with behavioral health needs.

Will you commit to embracing behavioral health as a public policy priority?

Yes, absolutely— pushing legislation which strengthens funding for and systemwide coordination of behavioral health programs, and taking a stronger public health approach to these issues, is a top priority for me. After working on progressive causes ranging from spearheading anti-bullying campaigns to fighting for better health care and wages for Walmart workers, I understand well the critical role that behavioral health services play in keeping Californians healthy and ensuring our communities thrive.

I believe I am the best health care candidate in this race. I am proud to be endorsed by Planned Parenthood and CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates, a coalition of community clinics throughout the state.

Darrell Steinberg, who has also endorsed my campaign and mentored me during this race, has been a leader on pushing for mental health system reforms, whether it be during his time as California Senate President pro Tempore, or as the current Mayor of Sacramento. He and I have spoken directly about the need for legislative championship on these issues, and if elected, I am prepared to work tirelessly to be that champion.

I have made behavioral health reform a key component of not only my health care platform but also my homelessness platform and education platform, because I understand that meeting Californians' behavioral health needs means taking an intersectional and multi-pronged approach to policy reform. We must enact reforms in all our public systems to make behavioral health supports and resources more accessible and effective for all Californians.



Assemblyman Jim Wood

Candidate for Assembly, District 2

1 QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Why does behavioral health matter?

I have been working on behavioral health access for the last 4 years in the Assembly. What we need is more people to make it a budget priority- that is where we fall down.

I am committed to making behavioral health a top policy priority.